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### Another View of Stream Flows


The stream flows of many Connecticut small to medium streams have been affected over the years by diversions and withdrawals of water made by parties claiming rights thereto. These were made for a wide variety of purposes, ranging from golf courses to industrial use to agricultural use. Largest, in the aggregate, have been those withdrawals made by water companies. Their objective has been to divert stream water into water distributions systems, and ultimately, to deliver safe drinking water to the public. Now that vital public purpose may come into conflict with the new stream regulations proposed by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

Why, one might ask, have these water companies focused on the smaller streams in the first place? The answer is because the state's largest water resources are off limits to water companies. The Housatonic River in the west, the Shetucket in the east, and the Connecticut River in the center of the state are Connecticut's largest rivers. However, they receive a waste water discharge upstream from any likely diversion point. They do not rate as "Class A" water courses under the rules of the Connecticut Department of Health, and therefore, they cannot be used as our public water supply.

This rule may have made sense many years ago. However, since World War II, the general quality of most large rivers in or passing through Connecticut has increased markedly as environmental improvements have been made and social consciousness has been raised. More importantly, the technology of water purification and treatment has improved to the point where utilization of these resources for the public water supply is perfectly feasible. Indeed, most other states would have done so already. Connecticut stands virtually alone in its steadfast refusal to review this option. It should do so now.

Utilizing these resources would provide an added increment of water supply, which the State will need in the future. Moreover, it would have the great benefit, over time, of relieving the pressure for watershed development on the state's smaller and more vulnerable streams.

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